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# ASPIRE Program Guide for Worksite Supervisors, 2014

Maine Department of Labor

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# ASPIRE Program Guide for Worksite Supervisors

Leading the way for job training



[www.maine.gov/labor/bes/aspire](http://www.maine.gov/labor/bes/aspire)

Worksite Supervisor

Work Experience

Handbook

Maine Department of Labor

Bureau of Employment Services

and

Department of Health and Human Services

ASPIRE Program

January 2014

**Work Experience Program Manager Contact Information:**

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Email: [merle.a.davis@maine.gov](mailto:merle.a.davis@maine.gov)



## A Letter from the Governor

Dear Employer,

Helping our most vulnerable citizens get back into the workforce with good-paying jobs is one of our state's top priorities. Having a job promotes self-esteem and creates family stability, not to mention provides a paycheck that can help people get back on their feet.

The collaboration between the Departments of Labor and Health and Human Services is exactly the type of work government should be doing, and I appreciate your efforts to make this program the best by becoming a worksite that serves the people of Maine.

Thank you for your dedication to this program and, more importantly, to helping needy families in Maine get a new start and strengthen their family and relationship to the community.

Sincerely,

Paul R. LePage

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## Work Experience Services Program Introduction

Maine's Department of Health and Human Services' Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and Additional Support for People in Retraining and Employment (ASPIRE) programs and the Department of Labor's Bureau of Employment Services (BES) offer employment and training programs designed to develop an individual's critical employability skills and help them successfully transition to employment. Work-experience opportunities focus on an individual's vocational interests and develop essential employability and occupation-specific skills.

As a worksite supervisor, this requires that you work carefully with the BES worksite development specialist to design, implement, and manage a work experience plan. This plan could include up to 26 weeks of work experience ranging from 1 to 40 hours per week. Our employment and training programs lend necessary support to the participant to ensure their success. These additional services are intended to help participants reach their education and employment goals. Services may include help with transportation to and from the worksite, child care, and appropriate work attire.

Work experiences are planned, structured learning experiences that take place in a workplace for a limited period of time. Work experiences may be paid or unpaid. Work experience workplaces may be in the private, for-profit sector; the non-profit sector; or the public sector. The work experience is also intended to provide the opportunity to:

- may earn extra income.
- acquire successful work habits and job skills.
- gain an understanding of the attitudes, skills, and essential work.
- learn competencies necessary to succeed in the world of work.
- provide services that contribute to the improvement of communities.

The success of the work experience program relies upon the cooperation and understanding of all involved parties; BES worksite development specialist, the work experience participant and the worksite supervisors.

To help achieve these objectives and to ensure that the work experiences are meaningful and constructive, this handbook provides a detailed description of the work experience program rules and regulations and the rights and responsibilities of all those involved. This serves as a guide for a productive and rewarding work experience for everyone and lays the groundwork for an individual's longer-term participation in the work experience services program.

On behalf of the Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Labor, welcome and thank you for participating as a worksite in the work experience services program.

## **Program Participants and Work**

For many participants, this work experience may be their first chance to test their abilities while discovering their career preferences and learning what they need to accomplish to achieve their career goals. They will have the opportunity to gain competence and confidence in areas that are basic and common to almost all jobs. For others who are recently unemployed or under-employed, and interested in getting back into a job or career, this will provide them the opportunity to hone work skills or learn new skills within their career fields of interest.

New entrants into the labor force may not be aware of the basic standards of employment, such as calling the worksite if they're going to be late or absent. They may not ask questions when they're unsure of next steps or if they need additional information. They may not finish every task before moving on. They may not respond well to the expectations of work and their supervisor. Many may not know the standards of proper language or dress for the workplace.

It may be that the participant is completely new to any work experience and/or may not have experienced good role models in his or her family. The supervisor becomes a role model for the participant and may become a mentor in their learning about and understanding of the world of work.

Each job can be used to help them gain an understanding of the nature of work and an employer's expectations while providing a chance to develop positive attitudes about work as well as their own abilities to succeed. It is important that work not be undervalued and the meaning and use of the task assigned be explained. The work experience itself must have meaning and value to the participant.

Whether a new entrant or someone returning to the workforce, there are significant differences in how people approach new tasks and learn new skills. Recognizing different styles of learning is important in ensuring a successful experience for each participant. Most participants learn, at least in part, by observing the behavior of others. Participant's paired with experienced workers and supervisors seem to learn the tasks, the attitudes, and the behaviors of their co-workers. Therefore, the careful selection of co-workers who are able to act as teachers, role models, and mentors is beneficial for both the participant and the worksite.

Constant and immediate feedback is important to participants and to the learning process. Be quick to praise and recognize good work and a positive attitude. Providing feedback about poor performance or behaviors is equally important; waiting until the formal evaluation time to discuss problems does not help the participant learn. Try to be specific and respectful when talking with a participant about problems or areas where performance needs to change or improve. Be patient, but honest, when providing such feedback. Always be ready to provide alternative practices or discuss solutions to problems with behaviors or attitudes. Let the participant talk through the problem from his or her perspective before indicating the change that is required. The participant may well be able to solve the problem her- or himself or offer important information that will resolve the situation.

### **Mentoring: Developing A Special Relationship**

Many people are not adequately prepared to enter the workforce and need the support of others. Strategies for helping participant become competent in general workplace skills and adept in using interpersonal communication skills are essential. Mentoring is a creative means of supporting participants through the transition of being unemployed or under-employed.

The primary goal of the work experience program is developing the participants in meaningful and lasting ways that prepare them to enter the workforce. Worksite supervisors are critical members of the developmental team of professionals in the work experience program. The supervisor spends time with the participant in a real work environment and can teach the participant much about appropriate workplace behaviors, expectations, work standards, and problem solving skills when things don't go the way the participant expected or hoped. Using the techniques of mentoring to establish a firm, positive, trusting, and respectful relationship with your participant will reinforce the competencies and skills that your participant is developing.



**Mentoring is a personal relationship developed over time in which a more experienced person helps guide a less experienced person through learning, dialogue, and challenge. Mentoring includes formal and informal communication and the sharing of expertise and knowledge relative to employment, careers, and professional development.**

Understanding and valuing diversity among participants is critical for mentors. A lack of understanding and appreciation for the diversity among people can result in conflicts with a participant that makes a mentoring relationship difficult at best and sometimes impossible. There is no easy way to gain an understanding of diversity, but the place to begin is with an open mind and a willing attitude to appreciate another person. Try not to be judgmental; listen first, then ask questions to gain a deeper understanding. Finally, be willing to share some of your background and perceptions about life. As you share personal information and perceptions about life, you will begin to gain the understanding and respect necessary for a good mentoring relationship.

Here are some tips for creating a mentoring relationship with a participant that may be useful in your own mentoring experience:

- Be understanding and non-judgmental.
- Take time to learn about your participant's lifestyle and culture.
- Remember, different does not mean better or worse.
- Confront inappropriate behavior directly and immediately, but with care and concern.

The work experience program presents a wonderful opportunity to engage and involve participants in their own learning and work-skill development. To realize this opportunity, the Worksite Supervisor must be a full and active partner with the participant in an interactive learning relationship, which empowers the participant through challenging work and cognitive learning experiences. The supervisor's role goes well beyond the traditional expectation of assigning and evaluating work.

Growing numbers of employment and education programs address the needs of participants to establish and demonstrate core competencies. These competencies are required to qualify for the jobs of today and tomorrow. The jobs of the future will require a number of underlying skills and competencies that involve complex analytical thinking and creative approaches to decision making and problem solving. These skills are rarely learned in a traditional classroom or job-training environment.

**The mentoring-type relationships established between participant and their Worksite Supervisors will reinforce the recognition, development, and enhancement of these core competencies.**

A team of professionals will be working together to provide the environment required for this kind of total learning experience for the participant. The core team members: the participant, the ASPIRE Specialist, the Worksite Development Specialist (WSDS) and the Worksite Supervisor want to ensure personal and employment success. These Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) are provided to assist you in making this a valuable work experience.

## **Frequently Asked Questions and Answers**

### **What should I do on the first day?**

At least part of the first day should be devoted to an initial orientation to the worksite and to you, the supervisor. Spend some time talking with the participant and getting to know him or her. The worksite orientation should include all of the following elements:

- A tour of the worksite.
- An introduction to other employees.
- An explanation of any equipment that may be used, including a demonstration of the safe use, care, and storage of such equipment.
- A complete safety orientation, including safe work practices and the reporting of accidents and injuries to you.
- Information about where to find supplies.
- An explanation of any special terms unique to the job or worksite.
- Information about special procedures, such as using the telephone, how files are organized, where personal items may be kept, etc.
- A complete briefing about the job, where and how it should be done, and who will provide help if needed.
- An explanation of your responsibilities and expectations as the supervisor.
- A review of the work experience rules for reporting to work and completing time sheets.
- The establishment of the weekly work schedule.

## **What about work hours and holidays?**

Participants may work up to 40 hours per week. Supervisors and the Worksite Development Specialist schedule the hours of work for each participant. Each worksite must maintain daily participant sign-in/sign-out records. Submit a weekly Time and Evaluation Form to the Worksite Development Specialist. Participants are not expected to participate on holidays under the Work Experience Program.

## **How do I deal with absences or lateness?**

You should expect a telephone call from the participant if she or he will be absent or late. If you do not receive such a call, please notify your Worksite Development Specialist (WSDS), whose name and contact information is provided in this handbook. You and the participant should note absences on the Time and Evaluation form. If the participant is consistently late or absent, you should counsel the participant about the importance of being at work every day on time as a workplace behavior and expectation and attempt to resolve any problem the participant has in meeting this standard. The Worksite Development Specialist will assist in such counseling if necessary. Persistent attendance violations may ultimately become cause for termination from the program.

## **What if there are problems with the participant at my work?**

Some participants experience difficulty in understanding the demands and expectations of work. You can provide advice and help the participant you supervise. If the problems are particularly difficult or persist, call the Worksite Development Specialist who will make a special visit to discuss the situation and problem-solve with you and the participant.

## **How should I present the job tasks to the participant?**

It is important to know something about the participant before putting him or her to work. Please spend a little time in conversation with the participant about the importance of the job and his or her contribution to your organization. Try to discover how well the participant follows general conversation and instruction. This will help you in how to present the work task information most effectively.

The following five-step instructional plan has been used successfully by other supervisors:

**Step 1:** Prepare the participant worker. Describe the task and explain how it fits into the total job. Find out what the participant knows about the task and explain the necessity of learning to perform the task well. Emphasize key points such as safety, contacts with the public, required accuracy, and cooperation with other workers.

**Step 2:** Present the task. Perform the task step by step. Tell the participant what you are going to do and explain why the task is done in that particular manner. Stress the key points. If there are safety considerations, describe how to avoid injury or damage to equipment. Demonstrate safe work practices, such as lifting or moving heavy objects. Be patient and don't assume the participant already knows how to do the task. Remember, for many participants, this may be their first work experience and they may be nervous, scared, or overly confident. Introduce one task at a time. Be sure the participant can perform each aspect of the task before moving on to the next thing.

**Step 3:** Try out performance. Have the participant perform the task. Ask him or her to explain every aspect of the task as she or he performs it so that you know the understanding is complete.

**Step 4:** Reinforce competency. Review the participant's performance, reinforcing proper performance of the task. Where the participant did not demonstrate complete understanding or performance, demonstrate and explain again. Don't emphasize the incorrect behavior, stress the right way to perform the task. Be willing to demonstrate the task several times and watch the participant several times. Compliment the participant when each task is learned.

**Step 5:** Follow-up. Assign the participant to the task and check often for continued positive and accurate performance. As the participant continues to demonstrate competence, check less often. Encourage questions and keep the lines of communication open. Provide specific feedback as often as necessary. Maintain a positive attitude and approach to his or her continued learning.

## **How will I evaluate the progress and performance of the participant?**

Ongoing supervision is the best way to provide learning and skill development. Every day you will be interacting with the participant and providing instruction, feedback, and role modeling of appropriate work place behavior, attitudes, and problem-solving. In addition to this supervision, you will be asked to provide formal written evaluations of the participant's progress during their work experience.

The Time and Evaluation Form asked that you rate the participant on eight core competencies including specific recommendations for areas of improvement. You are urged to go over these evaluations with the participant and provide specific feedback regarding her or his performance. Be sure to discuss areas of growth and success as well as areas where additional improvement is needed. During the course of the work experience, you will have the opportunity to meet with the Worksite Development Specialist to discuss the participant's performance and your evaluation of their work.

## **Can I terminate a participant from my organization?**

In agreeing to become a work experience worksite, each employer provides assurance that no participant will be terminated until the Worksite Development Specialist has been notified. The Worksite Development Specialist, in agreement with the worksite supervisor, will end the work experience agreement. However, if the participant is displaying behavior that is potentially dangerous to themselves or to others or is not complying with work experience or employer work standards, you may dismiss the participant for the rest of the day. The problem must be solved before the participant may return to work. The first step in the problem-solving process is to notify the Worksite Development Specialist who, along with the Supervisor and the participant, will determine possible solutions and the best course of action. If an acceptable solution is reached, the participant will return to the work experience site. If the problem cannot be resolved despite the efforts of everyone to reach a solution, the Worksite Development Specialist may remove the participant from the worksite. The Worksite Development Specialist may attempt to locate an alternative work placement for the participant and will attempt to place another participant at the original worksite with the Supervisor.

## **What if a participant wants to file a complaint?**

Most complaints from participants can be resolved quickly and easily if you take the time to listen to the participant's concerns and help the participant understand the situation. Be willing to take corrective action or alter the work assignment if necessary. These complaints can frequently be resolved without help from the Worksite Development Specialist, however the Specialist is always available to visit the worksite to counsel the participant or assist with the problem-solving or complaint resolution process.

Sometimes, the complaint is serious enough to require immediate intervention. If the complaint is about a violation of the terms and conditions of work, the rules for work experience participants, or illegal discrimination or harassment, calm the participant immediately. Listen carefully to the participant and call the Worksite Development Specialist as soon as possible. If the Specialist is not available, notify the Work Experience Program Manager at 207-623-7983. If your best judgment is to separate participant or send them home for the day, please note this carefully and be sure to tell the participant that the situation will be resolved.

The complete process is outlined later in this handbook under the section on Equal Employment Opportunity Law and Recognition and Prevention of Sexual Harassment.

If you have question or concerns, please call your Worksite Development Specialist or the Program Manager.

## **How often will the Worksite Development Specialist be at my worksite?**

The Specialist will attempt to visit every worksite every other week to check in with the participant and the worksite supervisor. The Specialist will discuss the progress and quality of the work experience with you. If necessary, the Specialist will visit more often or at any time you call and request a visit.

## **Will anyone besides the Worksite Development Specialist visit the work-site?**

No, however worksites will be monitored to be sure that all aspects of the program are meeting the needs of the participant. A special monitoring visit will take place at the mid-way point of the work experience. The monitor will:

- Ensure that all participant are provided with safe and sanitary conditions.
- Ensure that participant are receiving the most rewarding work experience possible.
- Identify problem areas and recommend solutions.
- Evaluate supervision and work experiences at each job station.
- Conduct interviews with the supervisor and participant for feedback on the operation and success of the program.

Finally, there may be special visits scheduled at exemplary worksites to showcase the work experience program for interested DHHS and labor department officials.

## **How can I recognize and reward outstanding performance?**

The best way to reward outstanding performance is to provide immediate positive feedback to the participant directly. The participant will look to you for information regarding his or her performance. Tell the participant about the outstanding performance; personal interaction between you and the participant is a critical aspect of his or her development. You may want to write a personal letter of recognition or commendation for outstanding performance or learning. The Worksite Development Specialist can help you prepare a letter if you request assistance.

In addition to your ongoing personal recognition, BES will provide certificates of outstanding performance at the conclusion of the work experience for those participants recommended for such recognition by their supervisor.

## What Is My Role?

1. Talk with the BES Worksite Development Specialist. Ask about the characteristics and needs of the participants assigned to your worksite.
2. Work as a team with the Worksite Development Specialist and the participant to develop strategies that will enable the participant to be successful.
  - a. Written instructions can also be given verbally; verbal instructions can be given in written form. This helps those with visual or hearing disabilities, as well as those with difficulties reading.
  - b. Post the instructions or rules so participant can read as often or as slowly as they need to. Allow participants time to refer to the instructions or check-off tasks as they are learned or completed.
  - c. Break large or complicated tasks down into small steps; let the participant try each step at his or her own pace to begin learning, then follow up to be sure the work is getting done correctly and completely. Review the steps or demonstrate them often when the participant is learning.
  - d. Use a variety of methods to teach participants how to do a particular task (demonstrate, explain verbally, diagram or draw pictures, etc.) so that each learning style is modeled.
  - e. Ask the participant to show you how he or she will do the task, make accommodations to the task to fit the ability or methods of the participant, and make corrections as needed.
3. Talk with the participant if he or she is having difficulty doing the job. Frequently, they can tell you what modifications are needed to enable them to accomplish the task. Taking the time to listen carefully to the participant's description of the problem or the solution is important in helping them adapt to the work and complete the task.



## What about “Accommodation”?

Your efforts to accommodate a participant at your worksite will assist many of them developing basic work skills and you will be fostering positive self-esteem for your participant employees. If a participant at your worksite requires complicated or unusual accommodations in order to perform the essential functions of the job, there are a number of local and state agencies that can help make the accommodations. Your organization may have some resources available to you. Your Worksite Development Specialist will assist with making additional accommodations or securing funding for special equipment or job aids. Your willingness and ability to make the worksite friendly and functional for participants is important to their self-confidence and the development of work skills and competencies.

Every participant needs your special attention; getting to know each of your participant workers individually will help you meet their special needs. BES staff will be available to help you with any participant or situation you find particularly difficult or challenging.

## Accident Reporting Procedure

### Accidents and Injuries

If an accident or injury occurs, supervisors should follow their accident/injury reporting process and procedure. Note the incident on the Record of Attendance and Time Sheet if the participant leaves work. Inform the Worksite Development Specialist about the accident/injury so the Specialist can assist with reporting and documenting time missed from the worksite.

**You are the responsible person at your worksite.** Participants are instructed to report any accident or injury, even minor injuries which require no medical attention, to you. They are also asked to report the incident to their Worksite Development Specialist. If an accident or injury is reported to you, or if you know about an accident or injury:

1. Talk with the participant and find out what happened.
2. If first aid is required, provide access to medical care. If time permits and the nature of the injury allows, call the Worksite Specialist right away, then make arrangements for medical care. The participant may want to call a family member for transportation to a medical facility.
3. In an emergency when someone is hurt badly, follow your organization's emergency response procedure. As soon as possible, call the Worksite Development Specialist to report the situation. If the Specialist is not available, please call Merle Davis, Work Experience Program Manager at 207-623-7983. Office hours are 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday–Friday.

**The time missed due to a work-related injury must be reported on the participant's timesheet in order to process the participant's time correctly.**

4. Evaluate the worksite to determine if the accident could have been prevented through better work procedures. Make adjustments to the job duties or the worksite if your evaluation indicates the possibility of making the work safer for participant.

## Locations



### **Augusta CareerCenter**

1 Enterprise Drive, Suite 2  
109 State House Station  
Augusta, ME 04333  
Phone: 624-5120/1-800-760-1573  
Fax: 287-6236

### **Bangor CareerCenter**

45 Oak Street, Suite  
Bangor, ME 04401-6667  
Phone: 561-4050/1-888-828-0568  
Fax: 561-4066

### **Brunswick CareerCenter**

275 Bath Road  
Brunswick, ME 04011  
Phone: 373-4000/1-888-836-3355  
Fax: 373-4004

### **Calais CareerCenter**

One College Drive  
Calais, ME 04619-0415  
Phone: 454-7551/1-800-543-0303  
Fax: 454-0349

### **Lewiston CareerCenter**

5 Mollison Way  
Lewiston, ME 04240-5805  
Phone: 753-9000/1-800-741-2991  
Fax: 783-5301

### **Machias CareerCenter**

53 Prescott Drive, Suite 1  
Machias, ME 04654-9752  
Phone: 255-1900/1-800-292-8929  
Fax: 255-4778

### **Portland CareerCenter**

185 Lancaster Street  
Portland, ME 04101-2453  
Phone: 771-5627/1-877-594-5627  
Fax: 822-0221

### **Presque Isle CareerCenter**

66 Spruce Street, Suite 1  
Presque Isle, ME 04769-3222  
Phone: 760-6300/1-800-635-0357  
Fax: 760-6350

### **Rockland CareerCenter**

91 Camden Street, Suite 201  
Rockland, ME 04841-2421  
Phone: 596-2600/1-877-421-7916  
Fax: 594-1428

### **Skowhegan CareerCenter**

98 North Avenue  
Skowhegan, ME 04976-1923  
Phone: 474-4950/1-800-760-1572  
Fax: 474-4914

### **Springvale CareerCenter**

9 Bodwell Court  
Springvale, ME 04083-1801  
Phone: 324-5460/1-800-343-0151  
Fax: 324-7069

### **Wilton CareerCenter**

865 US Route 2E  
Wilton, ME 04294-6649  
Phone: 645-5800/1-800-982-4311  
Fax: 645-2093

**TTY users call Maine Relay 711**

**Worksite Development Specialist Contact Information:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_



*Department of Health  
and Human Services*

*Maine People Living  
Safe, Healthy and Productive Lives*

*Paul R. LePage, Governor*

*Mary C. Mayhew, Commissioner*

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